



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

FACT AND THEORY ABOUT SHAKESPEARE*

The small group of Shakespeare studies upon which we are to offer an opinion represents some of the best of those recently appearing in English. On the whole, the outlook is cheering; for though we may not find ourselves willing to praise unreservedly, it is encouraging to find that all of the writers have had due regard for the solid facts, and have treated the subject with a due sense of their obligation to let us know when theory is substituted for fact. Indeed, the chief quarrel this reviewer has with certain other books about Shakespeare is not their mere errors, which may be forgiven or corrected, but their disregard of the difference between what they present as fact and the real fact. In the present case the books fall into two classes: summary of our ascertained knowledge about Shakespeare, and attempts to add to that knowledge.

Of the first sort is Professor Matthews's bulky volume. From the title, *Shakspeare as a Playwright*, as well as from the nature of the author's attainments and the direction of his studies in the drama, we are led to anticipate something different from what we get. With his wholesome knowledge of the actual stage, Professor Matthews might have given us a book both informing and stimulating, using light from the modern stage to illuminate some places on the Elizabethan stage which have remained dark, we believe, because most of the earlier critics studied Shakespeare's plays as they might have studied *Samson Agonistes*. On the contrary, we have here little more than another book

**Shakspeare as a Playwright*. By Brander Matthews. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1913.

The Facts About Shakespeare. By William Allan Neilson and Ashley H. Thorndike. Macmillan Co., New York. 1913.

The Sonnets of Shakespeare: New Light and Old Evidence. By Countess de Chambrun. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. 1913.

A Note on the Swan Theatre. By T. S. Graves. Reprint from *Modern Philology*, January, 1912.

The Court and the London Theatres During the Reign of Elizabeth. By Thornton Shirley Graves. University of Chicago Dissertation. George Banta Publishing Co., Menasha, Wis. 1913.

rehearsing well-worn criticism, in spite of the first sentence: "This book is not a biography of Shakspeare; it is a study of his stage-craft." It is, in plan and treatment, little different from such books as Brandes, Baker, and Bradley; one would not be unjust in saying that, for the library of the student, it is less useful than these. The most satisfactory part of the book is the second chapter, upon Shakspeare's Theatre; yet even here the statements made are somewhat vague, and unsupported by references even of the simpler sort. And of the remainder one is tempted to say that it is very much diluted, page after page dissolving like an insubstantial pageant into thin air.

Of quite a different character is the little volume by Professors Neilson and Thorndike, *The Facts About Shakespeare*, intended as a general introduction to the excellent "Tudor" editions of the separate plays. With no pretension in the way of adding to our knowledge by discovery of any specific fact, the book cannot be read, one ventures to say, without giving even the best-informed scholar some point of interest. The facts are attractively presented, in more or less popular form; but there is no padding in the book, and always the greatest care to offer the reader the option of pursuing his studies further if he please. In this regard the book should prove a serious rival to Sir Sidney Lee's. It has one advantage, and one lack, as compared with such a book for the general reader. In the first place, the writers have no theory about the Sonnets or about Southampton to defend; the former are presented without "entangling alliances," according to good democratic policy; the latter gets bare mention, and is not even thanked for that thousand pounds he is said to have presented to the author of *Venus and Adonis*. In the mention of this gift (p. 44), grave doubt of it is (properly) implied, as being a piece of Davenant gossip; and in the index the occurrence of Southampton's name on this page is not noted. In the second place, since this is a general introduction to an edition wherein each play will have its own foreword, there is little information about particular plays. A useful set of tables (pp. 71, 72, 76) sets forth, first, the results of the common metrical tests applied to the chronology of the plays, and then the order of the plays

with their approximate dates; in the latter the grouping of the plays as histories, comedies, tragedies, after the fashion suggested in the First Folio, brings out very vividly the interesting fact of the total disappearance of the chronicle play and the great preponderance of tragedy in the period between 1600 and 1609. There is also a useful set of appendices, upon one of which we may say a word. Appendix A, Biographical Documents and Authorities, is highly important from the point of view of the teacher anxious to so present Shakespeare to his classes that they will perceive the proper relation between the documentary evidence and the more or less valid interpretations of that evidence offered in the ordinary text-book. It tabulates and classifies and gives representative documents. For example, the biographical facts recorded in the parish registers of Stratford-on-Avon and in the corporation records are mentioned, with an indication as to where these records may be conveniently consulted in print, as in Halliwell-Phillipps or in Lambert; the text of Shakespeare's will is given; the passage in Meres's *Palladis Tamia*; the introductory matter in the First Folio, including commendatory verses. The only omission of moment—and one may at least hold this no serious fault—is the failure to include Rowe's *Life* in the enumeration of "sources of traditional material." It would seem to me that much of Rowe's material is based upon tradition, and upon tradition that we cannot safely pursue to its earlier sources. Upon the whole, we have here a thoroughly practical and teachable book, and one that is at the same time interesting.

One opens a book upon the Sonnets of Shakespeare with a certain rhyme ringing in one's head—"He who loves strange sights to see," etc. The interesting volume by the Countess de Chambrun somewhat justifies our anticipations; for there is a spell about the Sonnets such that none may study them without evolving some theories of his own; a spell that has sometimes been akin to that mystic "ducdame, ducdame" with which the crabbed Jacques flouts the Elizabethan singers of "the simple life." But it is just to the Countess to say that she does not cram her theory down your throat, but presents it attractively, if not convincingly. It is a thoroughgoing theory, whose main points

are: that the order of the Sonnets in the edition of 1609 is misleading; that the "young man" of the first group of Sonnets is Southampton; that this young man is the same as the rival in love; that the chief "rival poet" is Marlowe; that the "dark lady" is Davenant's mother, hostess of the inn at Oxford; and that, consequently, Davenant was Shakespeare's son. Though it will be impossible for us to discuss *in extenso* any of these contentions, we may say a word or two, and of the last especially.

In Scott's Journal (see Lockhart's *Life*) we find he has just been refreshing his vigorous mind, jaded with toil over *Woodstock*, by more or less desultory reading; this brings him again to the old gossip which Davenant was so anxious to have credited. The soul of the honest gentleman rebels, and he quotes from memory, as apposite to Davenant's claim, a now forgotten farce of Fielding's in which Phaeton complains to his mother that no one will credit the tale of his divine parentage:—

"By all the village boys I'm sham'd:
'You the Sun's son! You be damned!'"

Whereupon, Scott proceeds to use the quotation in *Woodstock*.

We are aware that jest is said not to be argument. If there were time, we might point out the unlikelihood of the Davenant story through a careful examination of the evidence presented by the Countess (from *Willobie his Avis*a and other equally suspected sources); but we content ourselves with the remark that, first, what we know of the innkeeper's wife is very little, very vague (was she dark or light?), and from sources similar to those that start the gossip about Davenant; and, secondly, the woman of the Sonnets appears to have been a "lady," a woman of some social standing and of those social acquirements (such as proficiency in music) little to be looked for in the wife of a country innkeeper.

Upon the rearrangement of the Sonnets, printed in the volume in the order the author proposes, it may be said that, once free yourself from the order of Thorpe's edition, and you find that scarcely two students will meet together so that the spirit of concord is in the midst of them. And again, the Countess her-

self notes (p. 15) that the Thorpe edition divides the Sonnets into three groups: "The text is cut after No. 126 by the words, printed thus, 'Series II', and again at No. 152 a division is marked 'Series III'." Then, on the basis of the fact that Thorpe, with or without authority for doing so, groups the Sonnets, she disregards his grouping for one of her own. Personally, unless we could call back the "spirit of him who left half told" this supposed story of the Sonnets, I prefer the Thorpe arrangement.

The author is exceedingly amiable and clever in her discussion, and though we hesitate to own ourselves convinced, no reader of the volume should find it unfruitful, and all should welcome the reprinting of Rowe's Life of Shakespeare, complete, in an appendix. It is a pity that a volume so nice in its general make-up, with interesting reproductions of pictures, should lack an index, and should be full of errors of the press. Not to enumerate too many of these, we note that in the very table of contents page numbers for the chapters are wrongly given, and on p. 97 a line in Essex's sonnet to Elizabeth substitutes "trips and haws" for "*hips* and haws." One of the fanciful illustrations, a reproduction of Rembrandt's "Dissecting Room," should not pass unnoted, as being especially suggestive when taken in connection with Sonnet 74 and with the famous verses upon the tomb.

We have reserved to the last our notice of the really scholarly work of Professor Graves. To examine in detail his valuable contributions to our concept of the Elizabethan stage would be impossible. He proves, we think, that as early as 1602 the Swan Theatre was provided with curtains and hangings; it is a warrantable inference that other public theatres would likewise have them. In his more ambitious study of the influence of the more elaborately appointed court stage upon the stage of the public theatre he makes out a very strong case for such influence. Though some of the evidence he adduces may be suspected (e.g., references to the Percy plays, which Albright shows, in *Modern Philology*, October 1913, to have been mere closet-dramas, never acted), the painstaking and wide research and the sound judgment he displays contribute to a fine result. As one

willing to see a millstone, if not capacitated for seeing into it, I have always wondered at the desperate clinging to the idea of a "bare platform" for the Elizabethan stage in the face of our positive knowledge that the court drama enjoyed a staging as elaborate in its kind as that of any time. Not to embarrass the reader with too much detailing of the evidence, what is the plain meaning of the words when one of the children of the chapel, acting in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, is made to say, in the Induction that preceded the play: "Away wag; what, wouldst thou make an implement of me? 'Slid, the boy takes me for a piece of *perspective*, I hold my life, or *some silk curtain*, come to hang the stage! Sir crack, I am none of your *fresh pictures that use to beautify the decayed dead arras in a public theatre*." The words italicized speak plainly enough, one would think, of scenery (*perspective*), of curtains, of arras, of pictures to decorate that arras, freshly painted by the stage artist. And again, where would be the point of Shakespeare's elaborate burlesque of the makeshift devices of barnstorming players, in Bottom and his troupe, if his own stage had nothing better to show?

In addition to the arguments so convincingly marshalled by Professor Graves to show that stage fittings on the public stage imitated those on the court stage, he presents others tending to modify the notion that the form of the theatre was evolved from the inn yard with its open court and galleries all around. Unquestionably, plays were presented at inns. Professor Graves shows that they were also presented in the town hall of provincial towns. And he makes it seem very probable that plays presented at inns may have been presented, not in the yard, but in a room. At least, as he suggests, it is highly improbable that so resourceful and energetic a set of men as the managers of the London theatres, when they came to build a play-house, would look only at the inn yard for a model, close their eyes to such models as the halls, the bull-rings, and refuse to exercise the inventive faculties that their own calling most constantly exercised.

PIERCE BUTLER.

Newcomb College.